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USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA GOTTLIEB, AFR/FO LAVELLE  
STATE FOR IO/EDA, AF, AF/W, AF/EPS, NEA/MAG, OES/ENV  
USDA/FAS FOR REICH, HUGHES AND CHAMBLISS  
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH; BRUSSELS FOR LERNER

FROM U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

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SUBJECT: LOCUST EMERGENCY: DONORS' MEETING AT FAO,  
13 OCTOBER 2004

REF: (A) ROME 3681 (NOTAL), (B) ROME 3669 (NOTAL)

¶1. Summary: At FAO Headquarters on 13 October, Director General Jacques Diouf and FAO Secretariat staff briefed representatives of donor governments and affected states on progress in bringing the locust emergency under control. FAO reported that the locust plague is "the worst in fifteen years." After a slow start, control efforts stepped up dramatically during September, when 745,000 hectares were sprayed. Diouf stated that, due to the sluggish donor response, what was a \$9 million problem eleven months ago has now become a \$100 million emergency. Thus far, FAO has received \$20 million in contributions, with another \$9.5 million pledged. U.S. representative and other donors, while mindful of the lag in donor contributions, pointed also to deficiencies in FAO's response, but they also recognized recent progress made. U.S. representative highlighted USAID's commitments to help address the emergency. In a private meeting with Diouf later in the day, the Ambassador stressed that USG criticisms of FAO were aimed at improving the organization's ability to respond to the present and future emergencies. Separately, U.S. Mission has tentatively discussed with EUCOM possible use of U.S. military assets in this emergency. At present we do not see an immediate need for such USG support, but we will remain in contact with FAO as it works to overcome initial glitches in the response effort and becomes better able to plan for future logistical needs. End summary.

#### LOCUST SITUATION

¶2. The FAO Secretariat characterized the current locust situation in the Sahel as "the worst in 15 years," and particularly severe in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. There has been significant damage to crops and pastureland. A significant number of new swarms are forming in the above four countries, as well as Burkina Faso and Chad. These swarms are spreading to the north and west into Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and could possibly move southward into the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea. Some 3-4 million hectares are infested. Further details are available at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org).

#### CONTROL ACTIVITIES

¶3. According to the FAO briefing, control activities have stepped up dramatically. Since the summer, a cumulative 875,000 ha have been sprayed. Of this, 745,000 ha were sprayed in September alone. The immediate objective is to protect crops, while reducing the number of locust. Currently 28 spraying aircraft are operating in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. Another 10 aircraft will be available in the next few days.

#### DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS

¶4. Diouf said that donor contributions have been slow to come in; donors are putting severe restrictions on how their funds can be used; and donors are not providing FAO

with information on their contributions (including bilateral aid). All this has hampered FAO's efforts, according to Diouf, and the result is that a \$9 million problem eleven months ago has become a \$100 million problem today. Thus far, FAO has received \$20 million, and it is using \$6 million of its own funds, and donors have promised another \$9.5 million. The organization has \$38 million in approved projects ready to go, and much more needs to be done. (Note: these numbers, spoken by Diouf, do not correspond exactly with the figures U.S. Mission obtained from the FAO Secretariat shortly afterwards, and should be taken only as a rough indication of the current situation.) Additional

constraints, according to Diouf, are: (1) the shortage of airlift capacity due to competing demands in Darfur and the Caribbean, (2) the time it takes to gear up pesticide production, (3) the fact that some pesticides have not been approved in all affected countries.

#### DONORS' QUESTIONS

15. Canada wanted to know if FAO could really use \$60 million if it arrived tomorrow, and stressed the importance of coordination throughout the UN system. A WFP rep said the UN agencies were "pulling together" in this crisis. Diouf pointed to the establishment of a coordination center in Dakar.

16. France said that in the short term there should be crisis procedures in place that, for instance, permit rapid transfers of credits. In the medium term, we need to make sure that the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) is effective. And we need to ensure effective coordination among all the players. Diouf agreed there are lessons to be learned from this crisis, and the Secretariat will provide suggestions as to how to assess

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this. He said that EMPRES worked last year when there was a similar outbreak in Sudan; the problem was contained and there were no headlines.

17. Sweden said it was about to donate SKr 5 million, but FAO has not provided any project documents that would allow Sweden to use that money. Diouf responded that "there is a limit to what we can do." All donors want project documents at the same time, he said; it takes time to negotiate agreements with major donors.

18. The US commended FAO staff for their hard work and praised the organization for providing timely warning of the crisis, but reiterated our disappointment with FAO's response thus far: (1) insufficient transparency and delays in use of donated funds, (2) delays in establishing a coordination structure/process, (3) inadequate staffing in the field, (4) lack of quick response mechanisms, (5) absence of a comprehensive information system. (See reftels.) We also mentioned FAO's failure to use its own Emergency Trust Fund for the locust crisis, and the Emergency Operations Division's apparent inability to give us specifics of what kinds of aid was needed, and precisely where and when, in response to our queries. We did note that there had been progress

in recent weeks/months, but said that an after-action review would be important to extract lessons learned. We also reviewed USAID's \$11.3 million commitment thus far for FY 2004-2005, and USAID/FFP's readiness to contribute short-term emergency food aid, if needed.

19. Japan mentioned its \$3 million contribution, stressing the need for more efficient procedures, more information, and more accountability so that the expenditures could be justified to taxpayers back home.

#### DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REACTION

110. Diouf reacted defensively and emotionally to some comments made during the meeting, using inflections and rhetorical flourishes that seemed to take some donors aback. He reiterated that the lag in donor response was largely to blame for the current situation. He said the Emergency Trust Fund was only \$2 million, and that had already been allocated to other emergencies. He said HQ did not understand how FAO could be more transparent about funds received. He said it was impossible to plan during a crisis, and difficult to give much advance notice of anticipated logistical needs. He conceded donors' point about the need for strict accountability, a conciliatory tone, so on a less contentious note WITH DIOUF

111. The Ambassador met privately with Diouf. The locust emergency topic of conversation was the Ambassador's focus in criticizing the outbreak were considered to improve FAO's ability to handle future emergencies.

112. We have taken the right track.

113. In September, the possibility of follow-up was discussed. We have appreciated EUCOM's willingness to assist in this effort within DOD operational, budgetary and policy constraints. In view of the currently fluid situation on the ground and the apparent mismatch between U.S. capabilities and current needs of the international effort being coordinated by FAO, we do not at present

foresee an immediate need for U.S. military involvement in this crisis in the near term. We will remain in contact with FAO as it works to overcome initial glitches in the response effort and becomes better able to plan for future logistical needs.

¶13. Minimize considered.

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